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Theo A. F. Kuipers

INTENDING IN TERMS OF REASONS FOR ACTIONS

REPLY TO JEANNE PEIJNENBURG

Some texts are more representative of the analytic tradition than others. As usual, Jeanne Peijnenburg contributes an essay which could teach many so-called analytic philosophers, despite their popularity, what a genuine analytic style is. In her own paper on analytic philosophy (Peijnenburg 2000) she is just too mild about the flourishing of anti-analytic styles in circles pretending to stand on the shoulders of analytic giants. In the present paper she argues, quite convincingly, that my analysis of intentional explanations has affinities with and deviations from the three dominant approaches, that is, the behavioral one of Anscombe and two alternative successors who take the mind into account, viz. the reductive, belief-desire model (notably, Hempel, von Wright, 1963-Davidson) and the nonreductive stance (1980-Davidson, Bratman). Moreover, I agree that my approach is best seen as a variant of the belief-desire model, which implicitly takes several of the criticisms into account both of Anscombe's as well as a nonreductive point of view. For details of similarities and differences, I refer to Peijnenburg's paper. In this reply I want to concentrate on two of her points. First, to what extent is my approach, in contrast to that of Anscombe, third-person-oriented? Second, is the nonreductive argument for "unintended intentional behavior" convincing? In both cases we can focus on intriguing examples – Anscombe's shopping list and the Audi and Bratman video game.

Explaining Shopping Behavior

To be sure, I used to present my specification model from the third-person perspective. In the shopping example somebody, a detective, observes collecting behavior of someone else, the shopping man. The mistakes they can make are indeed quite different, for observing collecting behavior is quite different from the behavior itself. However, Peijnenburg's claim is that I am only engaged with the third-person perspective and the corresponding thought process, viz., that of the

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detective, and not with the first-person perspective and the corresponding thought process, viz., that of the shopping man. Let us survey the possibilities. If I am the shopping man the detective may occasionally observe that I put a pack of flour in my trolley. His question is why I do so? Without consulting me, he may nevertheless form some hypotheses – e.g. that I want to bake an apple pie – and test them along the lines of the specification model, perhaps by consulting my wife or my notebook.

Hence, the interesting question is whether the model can also be used, perhaps with some modification, for the first-person perspective? Note first that when the detective asks me why I put the flour in the trolley, the question is third-person but the answer first-person, for I give my reasons, say an apple pie desire and a pie-needs-flour belief, hence a typical hybrid situation. Another impure case of the first-person perspective is when, also perfectly possible, I ask myself why I put the flour in the trolley. I may first check my list in order to see whether I did not make a mistake. If I see it on the list I have observed indirectly that I did put it on the list. Assuming that I remember having made the list quite consciously, the next question to myself is: why did I put it on the list? Recalling the answer in terms of an apple pie desire and some beliefs about how to make it and my home stock, I reach in this way a perfect intentional explanation for my own action in terms of my own beliefs and desires. However, it is true that in this case I consider myself from a kind of as-if third-person perspective.

Consequently, the remaining question is what a pure case of the first-person perspective amounts to. In response to the question raised to myself why I put the flour in the trolley, the belief-desire reasons may come immediately to my mind, in particular the pie-wish. In this case no further testing of the meaning components is necessary for they are self-evident to me. But this makes it neither a non-case nor a trivial case of the specification model. It would be trivial if I answered in terms of the flour-desire, that is the internal goal of the questioned action. To be sure, it is a special application of the model, which is not so much trivial but, normally, not informative. It may become informative if I experience serious memory problems or if I am cheating myself about my reasons, e.g. by replacing my unconscious wish to use flour for some peculiar activity, instead of baking an apple pie. In sum, it is perfectly possible to use the specification model to explain one's own behavior, but usually we know the answers beforehand.

The Video Game

The video game example claims to show that it is possible to perform an action intentionally, without intending to achieve its internal goal. Peijnenburg is quite right that my heuristic Principle of Intentionality (PoI, by default, actions are performed intentionally, i.e., with an external goal) presupposes that this is ruled

out. I even go as far as to claim that calling some behavior an action implies that the internal goal of that action was intended (SiS, p. 104). Before I question whether the claim about the example makes sense, I give two easy, but not therefore invalid answers. First, if the claim makes sense in a particular case we may make the presupposition in PoI explicit, for example in the following plausible form: by default, internally intentionally performed actions are externally intentionally performed. Second, in particular in view of the very complicated video game story, we may readily assume that actions are *normally* internally intentionally performed. Hence, in combination with the first answer we get: by default, actions are intentionally performed, internally as well as externally. This leaves room for three kinds of exceptions: actions that are neither internally nor externally intentionally performed, actions that are internally but not externally performed intentionally, and, finally, actions that are externally, but not internally, performed intentionally. The second case is perfectly possible from my point of view, and explicitly suggested in SiS (p. 104). The first and the third are excluded as soon as we assume that when describing some behavior as an action, the actor must intend the internal goal of that action description. However, if we leave room for such actions, the third case is not only even more intriguing than the first, its conceptual possibility would also make the possibility of the first case plausible. Hence, let us look at the video game, where I have to suppose that the reader has read Peijnenburg's description of it.

In the view of Audi and Bratman it is immediately assumed that "Vincent hit target 1" is an appropriate action description. Given the peculiar construction of the game, I would think that the plausible "exclusive disjunctive" approach suggested by Peijnenburg is the beginning of the answer. The action Vincent wants to perform is 'hitting precisely one of the two targets' and that is what he achieves. That he achieves it by hitting target 1 does not imply that it makes sense to say that he performed the action of "hitting target 1," let alone that he intended to do so. A tennis player may aim at winning a match, and actually win it, say 6-2, 3-6, 6-4, without aiming at this precise score. In other words, an action description, e.g. winning, may transform into an event description entailing an action description by making it more precise than the actor had intended, e.g. winning with 6-2, 3-6, 6-4 entails winning, where only the latter was intended. Similarly, we may say that Vincent hit a target (action) by hitting target 1, an event description entailing the action description. Incidentally, the tennis example illustrates either that the video game example is much more complicated than necessary to (try to) make a point, or that I missed the intended point.

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